

A Field with Crocker's Brigade.

By DAVID M. STRAIN.

Before leaving Vicksburg a large majority of the 15th Iowa and other troops as well, "retrained"—retrained for three years, or during the war.

In the Spring of 1864 the Seventeenth Corps joined Sherman at Chattanooga, where he was preparing for the Atlanta campaign. However, I had been sick in hospital at Atlanta and was not able to rejoin my company until just after the battle of Peachtree Creek, where Sherman defeated Hood, driving him into Atlanta. I was proud to see the Seventeenth Corps had won imperishable laurels in that engagement, but regretfully found that there was not one commissioned officer in the 15th Iowa, and that Second Sergeant, acting as orderly, and for a time was in command of the company, my duties in consequence being of an arduous and miscellaneous character.

ATLANTA.

We had been moved around to the northwest of Atlanta, Oct. 28, we were moving slowly through the woods and field toward the city. Suddenly our skirmishers encountered a solid line of Hood's army advancing toward us. Confederate General was making a movement similar to the one he made against our left at Peachtree Creek. The Fifteenth Corps was on our right, and the 15th Iowa was in the center. The fighting was extremely desperate, the battle opening about 1 p. m. and closing at 6.

The 15th Iowa was lying in reserve, about 300 yards east, in plain view of the fight. About 3 o'clock the enemy broke a portion of the line, causing a regiment of artillery, Gen. Logan sent to Gen. Belknap for a regiment to close the gap. Then was our time. Gen. Belknap took the 15th Iowa and went double-quick to the point indicated. Holding in a ravine about 100 yards from the gap, he ordered us to fix bayonets and charge. The rebels fought bravely, but we drove them back and closed the gap. The Confederates made daring assaults along our line, but were invariably repulsed. In that battle Gen. Howard commanded the Army of the Tennessee, he having defeated Gen. Pherson, who had been killed in a previous engagement. That night, after the battle, Gen. Howard walked along the entire length of the line, commending the troops upon their signal success.

Sherman kept moving his lines nearer the rebel fortifications, crawling up under cover of darkness and digging trenches, which we could conceal ourselves during the day. In the 10 or 12 days' maneuvering we ascertained beyond a doubt that the Confederates had strong fortifications all around Atlanta. Both sides indulged in a great deal of sharpshooting, and I think that in the game we lost two men were killed by sharpshooters. The assistant surgeon, lying on his cot in his tent, was rebuffed by a musket ball fired by some rebel sharpshooter.

One occasion we were ordered to be in readiness to march by 9 o'clock at night. There was no beating of drums, no blowing of bugles. The orders were spoken in whispers. The wheels of wagons and artillery were muffled. We marched to the rear, perhaps half a mile. The direction was changed, and we marched west and southwest, led by the engineers. All in a sudden we were confronted with a piece of artillery, confronted the enemy, to make them think we were "all there" as usual. About daybreak we heard the distant rumble of a motive south of us. Then there was cheering instead of whispering, and in an astonishingly short time "Sherman's hummers" were striding out on the railroad for miles, and what they did to it was a plenty.

We learned subsequently that the train was a "special" engine, carrying the passengers being notable who expected to join in a celebration of Sherman's retreat northward.

The enemy had one road left running into Atlanta from the south. Within 48 hours they were deprived of that, too. We marched upon it in broad daylight. It is unnecessary to say what we did with it. Gen. Hood was ordered to retreat. He soon thereafter retreated southward, Sherman pursuing as far as Lovejoy Station. Gen. Sherman moved us back to Atlanta, and in a general order there was a piece starting on the Atlanta campaign we had been 84 days under fire, and that he would give us some much-needed rest.

STILL AFTER HOOD.

We had rested some eight or 10 days, when we received orders from Hood's army was in the rear, to march to our communications. The entering Hood had attacked the garrison at Allatoona, an important strategic point. Being defeated there, he continued to move northward.

I think it was the next day after leaving Atlanta that we marched 20 miles, reaching at Smith's River, where we were attacked. We had scarcely eaten our "regulation" supper—hardtack, "sew-bird" and coffee—when our division, then commanded by Gen. S. S. Smith, was ordered to march. We were informed that Hood was trying to capture Resaca. The pioneers blazed the way for us across the exceedingly rough country to a railway station 16 miles distant. There we boarded stock cars that carried us 45 miles north to Resaca, in time to save the place.

On the next day, four or five miles out from Resaca, the enemy gave us a little battle at Snake Creek Gap. Their resistance at this point was merely to buy time for their advance, that they might facilitate their retreat through the gap, or pass, which is narrow and about 10 miles long. Their pioneers followed in their rear, felling trees across the road to check our pursuit. Gen. Sherman sent a detachment around with a view to intercept the rebels at the upper end of the pass, but the detachment was not in time. We continued to march northward, but we never saw Hood's army again.

IN A LOW GREEN VALLEY.

We were now ordered over into northern Alabama for a little rest in some rich valley where there was plenty of good water. We found just that kind of a place. It was delightful. The people were exceedingly hospitable, and treated us with kind consideration. In that little valley I saw a little 80-year-old man, who said he was born there and had never seen a town.

One night while I was stationing a picket guard along the mountain side, a big bear was scared from his lair and started down the mountain, it appearing to me that he took its tail in his mouth and rolled down. An old settler told me that when the bears of that locality wanted to descend a mountain or hill they "just took their tails and rolled down," as they could go easier and faster in that manner than on their feet.

When we regretfully left that pleasant Alabama valley we again marched in the direction of Atlanta. At Kenesaw Mountain we encamped for another rest.

FROM ATLANTA TO THE SEA.

The following is transcribed from my pocket journal—1864:

Nov. 11—In camp at Marietta, Ga. We received clothing for our outfit.

Nov. 12—We marched to Big Shanty, three miles north of Kenesaw Mountain. Having destroyed the railroad, we returned to camp, 6 p. m.

Nov. 12—The 15th Iowa received some drafted men and marched at 9 a. m. Went into camp, 5 p. m., near Atlanta, on our old battle ground of July 28.

Nov. 14—At 1 p. m. camped near Atlanta. Sherman's army destroying railroads and Confederate public property. Looks like Sherman intends to strike the Confederacy a hard blow somewhere.

Nov. 15—To-day we moved at 7 a. m. and went into camp at 7 p. m.

Nov. 16—Marched at 7 a. m. and encamped at 5:30 p. m. near McDonough, Ga. Rapid marching.

Nov. 17—Moved at 5 a. m. Camped at 5 p. m. on Sandy Ridge.

Nov. 18—Moved at 7 a. m., stacked arms at 2 p. m., and marched again at 11:30 p. m. Crossed the Ocmulgee River and went into camp at 12:30 a. m.

Nov. 19—In motion at 9 a. m. Camped near Monticello, Ga., at 7 p. m.

Nov. 20—Marched at 6 a. m.; camped at 8 p. m. Passed Hillsboro, Ga. About 50,000 soldiers are marching through Georgia, cutting a swath some 50 miles wide. We are devastating the country and devouring everything that hungry men can eat. Gen. Sherman's march is so arranged that his entire army can see him once or twice a week. The army marches by several nearly parallel roads. There are about our separate bodies—three of infantry and one of cavalry. Gen. Kilpatrick's cavalry, divided, scouts in our front and protects our flanks and rear.

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We remained in the pleasant and beautiful city during the holidays, having a reasonably good time.

ON THE OCEAN WAVE.

Jan. 6, 1865, we marched out of Savannah on a board vessel bound for Beaufort, S. C. Not being sailors, it seemed to us that the steamer was encountering an awful storm. The winds blew and the waves rolled high. We became seasick and lost our rations. About 3 a. m. the next morning, we disembarked at Beaufort, somewhat to the surprise of the inhabitants. By this time our stomachs were demanding to be filled. The hotels and restaurants were ordered to prepare breakfast for 7,000 "bummers." Unhesitatingly the proprietors undertook to cater to our clamorous appetites. This was not so difficult, as they could easily rake from the bay an unlimited quantity of fresh oysters.

IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

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